

U.S. CRITICIZES U.N. OVER BALTIC MOVE

State Dept. Says It 'Regrets' Ending of Contacts With Nationalist Groupings

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UNITED NATIONS, Jan. 11 — The Bush Administration criticized the United Nations today for bowing to Soviet pressure to cut off informal contacts with representatives of Baltic nationalist movements seeking independence from Moscow.

The State Department issued a statement saying: "We regret such a development. We believe United Nations officials should be able to meet with anyone."

The statement added, "We continue to endorse the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as the standard to which all states ascribe, and groups which believe their rights have been violated should have access to United Nations officials."

The United Nations recently suspended the informal contacts that it had maintained with Baltic nationalist groups for several months. The contacts had not previously been publicly acknowledged by any official of the United Nations.

Supporting Self-Determination

"The United States is one of a number of countries which do not recognize the forcible incorporation of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania into the Soviet Union," the State Department statement said. "We firmly support their efforts for peaceful self-determination."

The Soviet Union annexed Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia in 1940. Moscow now admits the move was illegal, although it remains opposed to giving the republics complete independence.

The suspension of contacts became public when a United Nations Assistant Secretary General, James O. C. Jonah, said in an interview with a Canadian newspaper this week that he was ending the contacts he arranged with Baltic nationalists. He accused the nationalists of exploiting their visits to the United Nations, and said they had angered the Soviet Union and embarrassed Secretary General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar.

Americans of Baltic origin have accused the United Nations of ceding to political pressure from Moscow. They say that the organization has failed to stand up for the principles of liberty and self-determination inscribed in its founding charter or in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which says that "the will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government."

As the State Department released its statement today, the United Nations refused again to allow the United States Mission to sponsor a concert of Baltic music played by Americans of Baltic origin on United Nations premises unless the Soviet Union gave its permission.

Battle Over a 'Baltic' Concert

Americans of Baltic descent have refused to request Soviet permission, arguing that the Soviet Union is occupying Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia in violation of the United Nations Charter and international law.

The United Nations chief of protocol, Aly Teymour, said of the decision: "We have our criteria. We cannot allow one country to represent the culture of another country unless that country allows it."

Mr. Teymour has rejected three applications to stage the concert in the Dag Hammarskjöld Auditorium at United Nations Headquarters, which is often used for cultural events.

In September 1988, the Mission of Equatorial Guinea agreed to sponsor a Baltic American concert arranged by Baltic American organizations and the National Federation of Music Clubs, which is accredited to the United Nations as a nongovernmental organization. Mr. Teymour's office agreed, then canceled the performance.